



# Conservation Conversations

Division of Conservation  
Department for Natural Resources  
Energy and Environment Cabinet

Issue 17

## Fleming County Conservation District Addresses the Non-Traditional Customer

Agricultural land and rural areas in Kentucky, as well as across the nation, have been shrinking year after year. Over time, urban, commercial and industrial land uses have gradually crept into the traditional rural and farming sectors. Many farmers who have farmed for generations are finding it extremely hard to continue a successful operation and have succumbed to reducing their acreage or ceasing their agriculture operation altogether. Some factors that may have contributed to rural, farm and farmland reductions include population, profitability, laws and regulations. As this trend progresses conservation districts face new and exciting challenges to

encourage and incorporate innovative measures to establish and maintain continued conservation awareness.

Conservation districts across the state have recognized this trend of land usage and have expanded to include and provide conservation services to nontraditional customers. Fleming County Conservation District has stepped up to this challenge with outreach and educational programs geared toward that nontraditional client. The Fleming County Board of Supervisors has always been a lead agency in promoting conservation through cost share programs, educational workshops, field days and outreach efforts. Most recently, efforts by the dis-

trict included a presentation made to the Fleming County Garden Club by newly elected board member Gene Jarvis. Jarvis presented approximately 20 club members with the history and establishment of conservation districts, an overview of their programs and the need for each operation, industry, business, individual or club to be responsible for their environment and practice good stewardship daily to preserve and protect all natural resources. His presentation focused on the need to incorporate and utilize soil testing for nutrient management and control, as well as proper chemical use and disposal and other responsible measures to ensure that

their activities do not contribute to non point source pollution. This is only the beginning of many informational presentations that will be provided by Fleming County Conservation District and other districts across the state to gain the involvement of nontraditional clients to make responsible decisions in protecting the environment around them. Even though land uses may have changed, conservation districts will continue to develop programs and services that lead the efforts to constantly and consistently protect air, land, water and other natural resources regardless of the land use activity or purpose.

## Garrard County Conservation Sponsors Backpack Program

The Garrard County Conservation District is always looking for new ways to promote conservation, agriculture, healthy food and the inter-related roles that each of these play. That is why when they heard about the Garrard County School Backpack Program, they jumped at the chance to par-

ticipate.

This program provided healthy meals for those children who may not have reliable meals on the weekends. Each week the backpacks are packed and distributed to approximately 300 children in the school system. Chairman Billy Doolin stated, "We never realized that

this was a big problem in our community and that it costs almost \$25,000 to fund every year. This is one way that the board gives back and along with that comes a lesson of where our food comes from."

The members of the district board made a decision to donate one month of pay and

the district matched this out of their rental equipment proceeds. This year several board members will also travel to the local schools to help pack the backpacks.

Conservation districts can impact their communities in many different ways, and in Garrard County, they hope this program can make a real difference.

## Butler County Attempts to Increase Participation in Contests

It's that time of year again: time for the Jim Claypool Conservation Art Contest and the Conservation Writing Contest. These contests have become a tradition in the state. However, like some other traditions, the contests have suffered with low participation at times. One conservation district in southern Kentucky has taken a slightly different approach than used in prior years to reach out to the schools in the county.

Amanda Arnold, district technician for the Butler County Conservation District, traveled to all of the public schools

in the county and spoke personally with the principal or assistant principal of each school. The hope is that the personal contact with the administrators will increase the participation. Arnold stated, "I hope that through these face to face meetings with the school administrators that I can increase the awareness of this great educational opportunity for students and teachers alike. Also through these meetings, I was able to convey how teachers can supplement their current lessons or jumpstart a new unit or lesson plan with the art and writing contest

educational packet that offers information on current issues with conservation that affects us all. It is much easier to establish rapport and a good working relationship this way, which I am confident will prove to be helpful in promoting future contests or programs with the schools."

Arnold's hard work seems to have paid off, particularly with the Jim Claypool Art Contest. Butler County had 20 art entries last year and 228 art entries this year.

## Letcher County Conservation District Holds Grand Opening

Letcher County was one of the first offices closed when the Natural Resources Conservation Service consolidated their field offices, leaving conservation districts across the state with the challenging problem of finding their own space. The Division of Conservation encouraged conservation districts in this situation to seek their own office spaces. The Letcher County Conservation District was able to find an office location on the city of Whitesburg's industrial site. Kenar Architecture of Frankfort was hired to design the office space, and Vanhook Enterprises of Frankfort was hired as the contractor. Letcher County Conservation District held their ribbon cutting and grand

opening ceremony on Friday, April 19, 2013.

The Letcher County Conservation District is very proud of its staff, its new office environment and the support it has received from the local community, local government and Division of Conservation. Letcher County Conservation District board members are Ron Brunty, chairman; Billy K. Banks, vice-chairman; Tex Isaac, Secretary/



Treasurer; Kevin Breeding; Tom Dollarhide; Randy Bailey; and Jim McAuley.

## Elliott County Conservation District Demonstrates New Seeder

On Thursday, March 21 the Elliott County Conservation District demonstrated their new great plains no-till seeder to approximately 15 landowners in Elliott County. The district purchased the new seeder through the assistance of the Equipment Revolving Loan Program administered by the Soil and Water Conservation Commission in Frankfort. The district has been providing no-till seeding equipment to their landowners



for many years through their equipment rental program. The district's old seeder was beginning to amount some hefty repair bills so the district decided not to invest a large amount of money repairing the old seeder that was nearing its useful life span. Instead, they decided that the purchase of a new seeder would be more beneficial, reliable and economical to landowners in Elliott County.

## Cumberland County Conservation District - Leaders in Proactive Community Conservation

It is often easy to get into a routine, especially at work. Too often, many of us fall into that routine of going to work, finishing assigned duties and looking forward to the end of the day or the weekend. That is not so for the Cumberland County Conservation District, and especially not true for their district secretary, Wanda Gilbert.

The Cumberland County Conservation District has taken a proactive approach to conservation, and that is putting it lightly. Each year, this district maximizes its resources and looks for creative ways to use available dollars to reach out to their local community. It is not exactly what one would expect from a very small county, miles away from the nearest "big town," but the environmental awareness shown here is clear, and it is important to them.

From observations of the inner workings of this office, it is clear that a driving force is Wanda Gilbert. Gilbert has loved every minute of working for the district. When asked about her initiative, Gilbert stated, "I can say that I truly enjoy working for the Cumberland County Conservation District. I have been working here for 12 years. I help farmers and students; they are both very close to my heart. I do extra because I love and support my county, the county that I was born and raised in."

In addition to her "standard" duties, Gilbert, with the support of the district board, searches for ways to utilize available funding to educate and assist the residents of Cumberland County.



This includes much work with the young people and schools in Cumberland County. Programs that the district sponsors include backyard conservation workshops, National Association of Conservation Districts poster and essay contest, Jim Claypool Art and Conservation Writing contest, annual fifth grade conservation field day and monthly environmental education workshops. The district also takes part in many programs sponsored by other groups, including the Cumberland County High School College and Career Fair, eighth and tenth grade reality store, eighth and tenth grade operation preparation, the Master Gardeners program, FFA county fair entries, Commonwealth Clean-up poster and essay contest, Kentucky Department of Agriculture poster and essay contest, Cumberland County High School Land and Soil Judging Contest, annual eighth grade safety day, Earth and Arbor Day events, and Stewardship Week events and classes.

It's obvious that this is a busy office that takes its duties of conservation education seriously. It is true that Gilbert is a driving force for much of this, but no one person can get this much accomplished without the support from their district board. This harmonious relationship is the key to producing these results; results that allowed the Cumberland County Conservation District to win the Kentucky Division of Conservation 2012 Outstanding Conservation District Education Award. Ms. Gilbert acknowledged this support

by stating, "The board of supervisors encourages and supports all these events and activities. They believe if you start teaching the students at a young age about conservation and the environment they will continue using that education throughout their life. They are supportive when it comes to helping the students and farmers. They also believe the more active that a district is in their community, the more support the district will receive from their community."

When speaking with board members, it is clear that they are grateful to have Gilbert on their staff and that they are both supportive and involved in everything that happens through this office. Jeff Mowers, Cumberland County Conservation District board chairman, stated, "Wanda goes above and beyond her job duties. She does extra events and that helps get the district's name out more into the community. She receives support and positive comments from the community members and local schools."

Having initiative, a positive outlook, and good relationships are key to a successful, proactive conservation district. Cumberland County is showing what can be done on our "front lines," even in our current state of lowering budgets and economic shortfalls. It is hoped that everyone can learn from offices like that of Cumberland County.





## Cleo Lee Retires After 42 Years

In 1971, Cleo Jordan Lee walked into a local bank in Breckinridge County and asked Dannon Brown, bank employee and also a supervisor of the Breckinridge County Soil Conservation District if he knew where she could find a part-time job. Brown knew where a job was available and directed Lee to go to the

Breckinridge County Soil Conservation office. She was hired later that month and as they say, the rest is history.

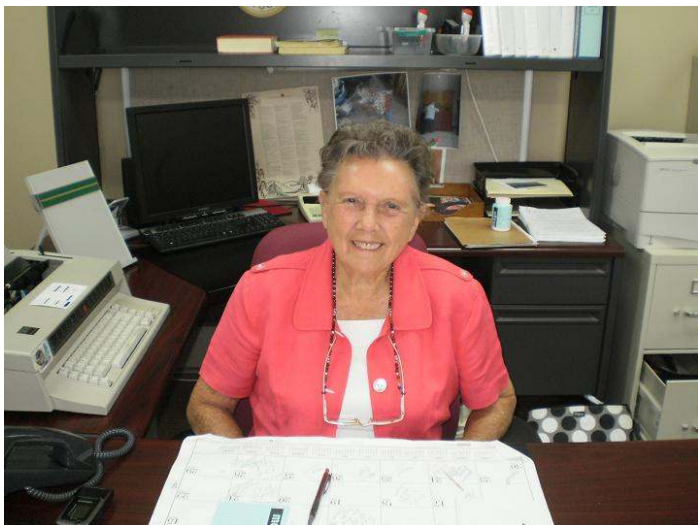
Lee began her career of 42 years at a pay rate of \$1.65 per hour. She worked three days per week and later went to full-time status. She typed on a typewriter and used carbon paper. She

used a rotary phone and lacked many of the modern office conveniences that we rely on today. Lee actually enrolled in a typing class at the local vocational school in order to refresh her typing skills. She has worked with 31 Breckinridge County Conservation District supervisors, four Division of Conserva-

tion field representatives, and two district conservationists.

Lee has seen many changes throughout the past 42 years and in 2013 she retired from the Breckinridge County Conservation District. She laughingly stated that she “retired because [she] refused to go back to the vocational school to take a course in computers.”

Lee said she had a “fantastic” retirement party at the Rough River State Park in February with 78 friends, supervisors and family members in attendance. Her initial retirement, however, was short lived. She was asked to come back to provide some office assistance for a few months. As that time has ended she has said that she will still help out when needed. Lee has many things that will occupy her time during her retirement, and the conservation community wishes her the best.



## Floyd County Conservation District Provides Training Opportunities and Awards

The Floyd County Conservation District board has a well-established training program with the Carl D. Perkins Job Corps in Prestonsburg. The district utilizes many students from the Corps to assist the district with day-to-day office operations, as well as with their programs and projects such as field days, awards banquet and workshops. These projects provide on the job training as well as a real time work atmosphere, which aids the students in their course studies. The hands on instruction and interaction with the district programs and other groups have proven to be an excellent learning and motivating tool for the Corps students.

On March 12 the conservation district held their annual spring banquet. At this event students are recognized and honored as county winner and county runner-ups in both the Jim Claypool Art and Conservation Writing contests. The district also recognizes the efforts

of kindergarten students for their participation in the contest. The winners are presented with certificates of merit along with monetary awards. Also during the spring program, the district takes the opportunity to award their *Service for Service* Scholarship. The district offers up to two \$1000 *Service for Service* scholarships each year to assist students achieve higher education.

This year as well as past years, the event was held at the beautiful Mountain Arts Center in Prestonsburg. The spring banquet is a semi-formal event catered by the Job Corps' Culinary Arts and Hotel Lodging class. The banquet hall was beautifully decorated with a spring theme, complete with formal dining settings, ice sculpture and fruit bouquets. The culinary students, waiters and waitresses of the Corps culinary class provided superb hospitality, service and created an impressive atmos-

phere worthy of a five-star recognition. The meal was complimented with an awe-inspiring acappella version of "My Old Kentucky Home" and "Wind Beneath My Wings" sung by the duet Busterlyn "Rose" Verdier and Anthony Stephenson.

The conservation district appreciates how this partnership with the Corps increases the students' skills and preparedness as they commence their chosen careers. Chairman of the Floyd County Conservation District Lenville Martin said, "It's a win-win situation. We help students achieve on-the-job training to meet their educational goals, and they help us in providing successful programs and presentations like this. We all benefit from this partnership."

## Woodford County Earth Day Celebration

The Woodford County Conservation District sponsored a Woodford County Earth Day Celebration on Saturday, April 13 at the Agriculture Resource Building, in Versailles. Hundreds of Woodford County residents arrived early to take advantage of the many opportunities the day offered.

Attendees received free tree seedlings, which included White Dogwood, Redbud, Kentucky Coffee, Pawpaw, White Pines and others. There were tree planting demonstrations and handout materials sponsored by the Division of Forestry.

The Woodford County Extension Service Horticulturalists demonstrated how to take a soil test to any resident that wanted to participate in the conservation district's free soil test program. Through this program, residents can submit up to 20 soil samples for testing through the UK Extension Ser-

vice.

Attendees took advantage of the many exhibitors setup in the basement and grounds of the Agriculture Resource Building all day. This helped the public to understand the need to protect our environment and natural resources.

Exhibitors included the Woodford County Recycling Center, Woodford County Historical Society, Woodford County Ministerial Association, Pisgah Historical Association, Buckley Wildlife Sanctuary & Audubon Society, the Woodford County Historic Jack Jouett House, Natural Resource Conservation Service, Woodford County Life Adventure Center, Bluegrass PRIDE, Woodford County Extension Service, the Woodford County Fair Board, Kentucky Division of Forestry and Woodford County Farmer's Market.

One of the most popular activities of

the day was "Paint with Bessie." Volunteer Bessie Bain assisted students in painting paper bags that were given to customers at Kroger on Earth Day. All Woodford County Elementary Schools also assist in painting over 1000 bags. The students are in charge of relaying the message of Earth Day through their artwork.

Woodford County Conservation District board of supervisors and staff were in attendance throughout the day talking with the public about the district's programs, including their equipment rental program, dead animal pick-up program, free soil tests, rock gateway programs and others.

Chairman Harold Carmickle feels that this is one of the best and most successful programs that the district sponsors each year. It was a great day for all that attended and participated in the celebration.

## Meade County Agricultural Field Day

The Meade County Conservation District and Extension held an agricultural field day on Friday, August 2 at Barger Farms. Approximately 125 members of the public were there for the tour of the grain and cattle farm.

Representatives from the University of Kentucky, Meade County Conservation District and the Natural Resource Conservation Service, as well as Jamie Barger were on hand for a tour.

Throughout the tour, there were several stops that showcased agriculture water quality plans, soybean population differences and trials, forage quality, selecting the right bulls for your operation, fungicides on corn and conservation on a changing landscape.

Commodity Marketing Services and a UK agriculture economist provided the lunch presentation talking about current market prices and future fluctua-

tions. A great meal was provided by the Midway Homemakers and Webb's Butcher Block.

Barger commented on how important it is for the farmers and landowners in the agricultural community to stay connected and up to date with as much information as possible to improve their operations.



## Big Reedy and Caney Creek Conservancy Districts Hold Joint Board Meetings

On Feb. 19, 2013, the joint meetings for the Caney Creek Conservancy District and the Big Reedy Conservancy District were held at the Grayson County Cooperative Extension Service. The meetings were held to set the tax rate and approve or disapprove the budgets for the 2013-2014 fiscal year.

The Caney Creek Conservancy District includes land in portions of Grayson, Ohio and Butler counties. The Big Reedy Conservancy District includes land in Edmonson, Butler and Grayson counties. Each county is entitled mem-

bership on the conservancy district board.

The Big Reedy Conservancy District meeting was called to order first. Grayson County Conservation District Vice-Chairman Mike Shull chaired the meeting. Big Reedy Conservancy District Treasurer Baird Huff presented the budget. The budget and tax rate were approved.

The Caney Creek Conservancy District meeting was called to order second. Grayson County Conservancy District

Chairman Kim Seaton chaired the meeting. Ronnie Renfrow of the Caney Creek Conservancy District presented the budget. The budget and tax rate were approved.

Holding joint meetings allows members of both conservancy districts to utilize their time efficiently. Since the land area for the two conservancy districts are very close together, all members feel that each board should continue to be aware of the actions of the other board. The meeting will be held in Butler County in 2014.

## Laurel County District Staff Participates in Eco-Edventures Workshop

ECO-EDVENTURES was a three-day workshop event, held in cooperation with Laurel County Schools, to educate elementary and middle school students about the importance of natural resources. The event took place at the Feltner 4-H Camp outside London. The students rotated through different stations where they were given information by environmental experts about the importance of natural resources and why these resources are necessary for human survival. Laurel County Conservation District coordinator David Coffey and technician Jamie Ponder gave presentations about the importance of soil and water resources and conducted demonstrations showing how soil erosion occurs unless things are done to prevent it.

Coffey and Ponder told the students that in order to control or reduce erosion, people must know about soil. They explained to the students about the different types of soils and how soils are separated and classified based on certain characteristics: the particle size or texture, color, the soil's ability to retain water, percent of organic matter and other characteristics.

Coffey demonstrated water runoff from rain storms using four trays (see picture). One tray was uncovered soil, simulating a plowed field. Another was

soil covered with crop residue. The third tray was short grass, simulating an over-grazed pasture field. The last tray had thick grass about three inches high. By pouring water over each tray, simulating the rain, students saw the difference in soil erosion, observing the runoff from the different trays.

Coffey and Ponder then talked to the students about soil and water resources, including discussions on how 75 percent of the earth is made up of water, with only about 3 percent being fresh water, how an inch of topsoil can be lost in a single rain event and how only 10 percent of the earth is made up of arable soils.

Coffey and Ponder also talked to the students about the three types of soil erosion — sheet erosion,

where the entire surface of the land is eroded; rill erosion, where small channels of erosion are seen; and gully erosion, where large gullies are formed from heavy rains if the soil is left bare and without adequate vegetation.

Other agencies that participated in this workshop were the Laurel County Extension Service, the Natural Resource Conservation Service, the U. S. Forest Service, the Kentucky Division of Forestry, the Kentucky Department of Fish and Wildlife, the U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service, among others.





# Caldwell County Conservation District Promotes Soil and Water Stewardship

The Caldwell County Conservation District offers a reminder that each individual has a connection to natural resources: a connection observed during Soil and Water Stewardship Week.

The National Association of Conservation District's (NACD) celebrated the 58th year of Soil and Water Stewardship Week April 28 – May 5. The theme for the week for 2013 is, "Where Does Your Water Shed?"

During Soil and Water Stewardship Week, Caldwell County Conservation District will provide public service announcements to the local radio station, bookmarks for local school children and litanies for area churches.

"Clean water is important to everyone," says NACD President Earl Garber.

"Watersheds come in all shapes and sizes. They cross county, state and national boundaries. Every inch of land on planet Earth is part of a watershed. In the continental U.S., there are 2,100 watersheds; if we include Hawaii, Alaska and Puerto Rico, the count rises to 2,267. No matter where you are right now, you are in a watershed."

Take time to learn about local community water supply sources, and volunteer for river, stream or beach clean-up days. Every person can make a difference. To find out more about local watersheds, including an app for computers and smart phones, visit: [www.epa.gov/mywaterway](http://www.epa.gov/mywaterway).

The Caldwell County Conservation District is a member of the National Association of Conservation Districts

([www.nacdnet.org](http://www.nacdnet.org)) which oversees the Soil and Water Stewardship Week program. Soil and Water Stewardship Week is one of the largest national annual programs to promote conservation. NACD represents the nation's 3,000 conservation districts, which were established to encourage resource conservation across the nation.

For more information about Soil and Water Stewardship Week and conservation, persons may contact their local conservation district, their state association or the NACD. Additional information about the "Where Does Your Water Shed?" program and other natural resource education material is available at the NACD website at [www.nacdnet.org/education](http://www.nacdnet.org/education).

## Students Decorate Grocery Bags for Earth Day

The local observance of Earth Day included a project with the partnership of the Caldwell County Elementary School, Hancock's Neighborhood Market and the Caldwell County Conservation District. The partnering groups hope that by bringing the Earth Day message to the local students, they can spark an interest in environmental issues throughout the community.

Hancock's Neighborhood Market furnished the paper bags that the elementary

students decorated with a colorful environmental message. Cindy Dunn of the Caldwell County Conservation District presented the students with a program about Earth Day and what the students can do to help their environment. These decorated bags will be used for groceries purchased at Hancock's on Earth Day.

The first Earth Day was celebrated in the United States on April 22, 1970, according to Dunn. It is estimated that

20 million people celebrated the first Earth Day. Since that time, Earth Day has become a world-wide event that is celebrated by more than half a billion people.

"Earth Day reminds us that it is our personal responsibility to protect and defend the purity and safety of this beautiful planet on which we live," Dunn said.

## Wastewater System Environmental Grants Reduce Point Source Water Pollution

Failing septic systems and straight-pipes create water quality problems in rural areas. This has created water quality issues across eastern Kentucky. Some conservation districts are trying to correct this problem by funding septic systems.

Districts take applications throughout the year from prospective homeowners. They then use environmental grant funding gained through the Soil Erosion and Water Quality Cost Share Program to help fund the septic projects.

The local board, with the assistance of the local health department environmentalist, ranks all the applications received to determine which applications are funded. In most districts, priority is given to low-income, disabled or elderly applicants.

The number of applicants funded each year is dependent upon the amount of grant funding available. The Harlan and Knox County Conservation Districts, for example, are each able to provide funding for about three to five

homes a year. In most districts, the state provides 75 percent of the funding for each project through the cost share program, and the local conservation district provides 25 percent of the funds.

Approximately 20 counties in the state are actively working on these environmental grant projects, and cooperation and action on local and state levels are working to provide better water quality, especially in areas where pollution is endangering quality of life.

## Dedication on the Local Level Leads to Success for Water Quality

When the Lincoln County Conservation District started a project nearly 10 years ago in the Hanging Fork Watershed, they had no idea that it would continue and expand. They certainly never imagined receiving over \$460,000 in grant funds to help local residents improve water quality, but that is exactly what has happened.

Years ago, a local group called the Dix River Watershed Council worked with the Kentucky Division of Water (KDOW) and Third Rock Consultants to create a watershed plan. The quality of the local waterways was polluted enough that it was unfit for swimming and fishing. That alarming fact motivated the conservation district to form a watershed council, and they created a local plan of action to work towards cleaning up our waterways. That work still continues today.

The district was able to work with what was then the Kentucky Heritage Resource and Conservation Development Council to administer a federal 319 grant made possible by the Clean Water Act. The project began in a very small, rural part of the watershed called Peyton Creek in 2002. Years later they have a watershed oversight committee and a watershed coordinator, and they have assisted numerous landowners in the watershed in education about and implementation of best management practices to improve the water quality. Since this area had a high concentration of livestock, the district provided funding for education and for the implementation of fencing, alternative water sources, animal waste facilities, shade structures and stream buffers. All of these practices removed livestock and their waste from the water.

The Peyton Creek farmers and landowners loved that they were able to provide their input

and do their part by sharing the cost of these best management practices. Not only did this local participation make the Peyton Creek project so successful and nationally recognized; it also encouraged the conservation district to continue the work in a larger part of the watershed.

The district's goal all along was to get local people involved and design this project with their input, realizing that making a dent in the problem would require them to start small. With additional grant funds through Kentucky Division of Water and the use of Kentucky Soil Erosion and Water Quality Cost Share funds as match, this project has expanded to include numerous landowners and a watershed coordinator, Paul Jefferies.

"This program was one of the best for the farmers and landowners because of the cost share rate, the practices available and it made a big impact on their operations," said Jeffries.

"Most all landowners are good stewards of the land anyway and they want to do their part and make a difference. This is why we were able to establish a good relationship with the landowners and actually assist them in improving the water quality".

Because of the larger scope of the growing project, the district partnered with the Boyle County Conservation District. They were able to secure and provide

funding for winter feeding areas for livestock, further addressing animal waste issues by moving feeding areas away from the creeks.

The districts' staff has worked locally to create additional water quality plans and spread awareness about water quality in the area. One example includes the construction of a billboard on the side of US Highway 150 that reads "Thank a Farmer when you see protected tree lined buffers along our creek banks – conservation improves our water quality." Additionally they were able to host a field day on the Will Stallard farm in Boyle County where they demonstrated many of the successful projects. Over 125 farmers and landowners in both counties attended.

This project would not have been successful without the collaboration of many agencies including the Ag Watershed Oversight Committee; Boyle and Lincoln County Conservation District Boards; Natural Resource Conservation Service staff; Boyle and Lincoln Cooperative Extension offices; Kentucky Division of Water, Kentucky Division of Conservation, Dix River Watershed Council; and the staff and technician of the Lincoln County Conservation District. Without their willingness to keep up with the never ending paperwork and reports, handling money and working one on one with landowners, this project would not have happened.

According to NRCS District Conservationist Bo Renfro, "none of this would have been possible without people that were willing to work together and work hard to make projects like this successful. There has to be dedication on the local level to take on a project this large and run with it."

Both districts are very satisfied with the results and offer their thanks to all involved. As for what lies ahead for this watershed – the districts hope it will be improved water quality, better informed citizens and maybe even a new project.

